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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the development of fundamental rhythm skills involved in music and movement activities, this teaching guide emphasizes activities that will help children express their feelings and communicate with others, develop perceptual and motor skills, and enhance sensory awareness. Suggestions for involving handicapped children and examples of rhythmic activities are provided, along with guidelines on materials, construction, and use of 13 musical instruments. A concluding section outlines directions and procedures for playing a game with lumni sticks. A bibliography is included at the end. (DS)

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RHYTHMIC ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN

Rhythm can be found all around us--from the beating of our own hearts to the movement of a police officer's arms directing traffic to the dipping and gliding of a bird in flight. Art, poetry, and drama involve rhythm, although music and dance are often the first activities that come to mind when discussing rhythm programs. The focus of this Practical Pointer is on developing fundamental rhythm skills involved in music and movement activities.

BENEFITS OF RHYTHMIC ACTIVITIES

Music and movement provide ways for children to *express their feelings* and *communicate* with others. These nonverbal activities allow children who lack adequate vocabularies or have speech problems to express themselves effectively. In addition, children can release inner feelings and give meaning to their words through dancing, taking part in simple rhythms, playing instruments, and participating in other music activities.

Perceptual and motor skills may be enhanced in a variety of ways through rhythmic activities. Gross and fine motor skills are required for and may be improved through such activities as rhythmic finger plays, action songs, and lummi sticks. Playing rhythm instruments requires matching one's movements to instructions being given or music on a record (auditory motor integration), as well as imitating movements made by the group leader and other children (visual motor integration).

Since rhythmic activities call upon the senses, *sensory awareness* may be enhanced. Listening skills, attention to what one is seeing, and awareness of tactile properties of materials used in rhythmic activities are especially likely to be improved.

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INVOLVEMENT OF HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

Because of the exploratory nature of fundamental rhythms, they are good activities for mixed groups of handicapped and nonhandicapped children. Children can learn to move and respond unhampered by restrictions and rules and, as they become more confident, can then move on to activities that require following directions and more sophisticated skills. Not all handicapped children will possess the basic abilities necessary for mainstreaming into regular programs. For these children, rhythmic activities are particularly important as a means of acquiring needed skills and abilities.

Hearing impaired children may be assisted to hear the rhythm of an activity by feeling vibrations from the piano, record player, floor, or furniture. Speakers placed directly on a wooden floor enhance intensity of vibrations. Bass tones also enhance vibratory receptions.

Visually impaired children should be introduced to rhythm instrument through touch and allowed to explore the area where activities will be conducted before being expected to use instruments and participate in movement. When specific movement patterns are being taught, lead the child physically through the pattern and let him/her feel the placement of other's bodies. Since visually impaired children may be afraid to move freely, rhythms, particularly those involving the whole body, will help them become more mobile and better understand their bodies.

Children with *physical or mobility impairments* often need little more than slower tempo of music to permit their full participation in rhythmic activities. These children should be encouraged to participate using whatever parts of their bodies are most mobile. For example, rhythm instruments can be placed on the floor and struck with the feet, or placed on a table and struck with a headstick or mouthstick. When appropriate, physically impaired children may get out of their wheelchairs and join other children on the floor or on gym scooters for rhythmic activities.

Mentally retarded, brain injured, or perceptually impaired children may have problems with activities involving knowledge of left-right, up-down, front-back, and other directional concepts. Materials and areas could be color coded for these children. Directions may have to be simpler and less wordy, and demonstration is often the best teaching method.

RHYTHMIC ACTIVITIES: SOME EXAMPLES

Tap a Secret Code

Children line up behind one another single file. Person at end taps a rhythmic pattern or code on back of child in front of him. That child passes the code along to the person in front of him in the same manner. When child in front of line receives code he/she claps the message for all to hear and compare with the original code.

Echo Game

Clap, tap, or play an easy rhythm pattern on a rhythm instrument. Have children respond by echoing the pattern. Start with simple, even patterns and repeat each one until children can imitate it accurately. Patterns can become more complicated as children improve. Have children take turns being leader and clapping patterns for other children to clap back. They can later respond to clapping with movement patterns instead of clapping back. Clap pattern once for children to listen, and then repeat pattern as they respond with movement.

Orchestra Leader

While listening to music children move arms like the music moves. After they get into the swing of it, have them close their eyes and pretend they are the conductor leading the orchestra or band. Then have them open their eyes and designate one child as the orchestra leader; other children follow his movements. He can tell others to all do the same movements or designate different movements for various groups of children.

Rhythm Band

Rhythm instruments can be used as accompaniments for singing and dancing as well as for their own sake. Making the instruments can be half the fun! The charts on the next two pages give instructions for making and playing fourteen common rhythm intruments.

RHYTHM INSTRUMENTS

INSTRUMENT	MATERIALS	CONSTRUCTION	USE
Box Banjo	Four or five rubber bands of varying thicknesses; sturdy box with one side open.	Stretch rubber bands around box.	Pluck or strum rubber bands. Experiment with sounds by moving them around.
Castanets	Elastic, buttons, needle and thread.	Cut two small pieces of elastic long enough to stretch around (1) child's thumb and (2) child's index finger. Sew each piece into a loop. Sew one button to each loop.	Slip one loop around thumb and one around index finger. Click buttons together in time with rhythm.
Comb Kazoo	Comb; waxed paper or tissue paper.	Wrap tissue or waxed paper around comb.	Place comb against lips and hum away!
Cymbals	Two large metal jar lids or aluminum pie tins; 4-inch lengths of broomstick or dowels; small nail or tack.	Nail or tack broom handle or dowel onto center of concave side of jar or piepan to serve as handles.	Hold cymbals by handles and bring together briefly. Experiment with sounds by varying loudness and degree of vibration.
Gong	Large aluminum can lid (paint can or garbage can), 12-inch leather strip or length of string or heavy yarn; large wooden bead; dowel or pencil to fit into bead; nail and hammer or drill.	Punch or drill hole near one side of lid. Paint or decorate if desired. Loop leather, string, or yarn through hole and tie. Glue dowel securely inside bead to make striking stick.	Hold gong with string and strike it with the stick.
Maracas	Light bulbs; newspaper; liquid starch.	Tear newspaper into strips. Dip newspaper into starch and coat light bulb with several layers. Break bulb when completely dry.	Shake maracas. Broken bits of light bulb inside make the noise.

RHYTHM INSTRUMENTS (continued)

INSTRUMENTS	MATERIALS	CONSTRUCTION	USE
Rhythm Sticks	Two 12-inch lengths of broom handles or dowels; sand paper (optional); paint.	If desired, sand edges of broom handles or dowels. Paint or decorate sticks.	With one stick in each hand, hold sticks near one end and tap together. Experiment with different tones and volumes.
Sandblocks	Blocks of wood; sandpaper; spools, glue.	Glue a spool to one side of each wooden block for a handle. Glue sandpaper (rough side out) to other side of block.	Shake.
Tambourine	2 foil pie plates or paper plates; poptops or bottle caps; string or yarn; hole punch.	Lace pie tins together around the rims. String pop tops or bottle caps around edges.	Holding tambourine in one hand, strike fingers against center and shake tambourine on every other beat.
Tuneful Tumblers	Three to eight glasses; water; spoon.	Set glasses in a row on desk or table. Fill each glass with different amount of water.	Tap each glass with the spoon. Experiment by varying amounts of water. Try to play tunes.
Tom-tom Drum	Jumbo snack container; dowel stick; large wooden bead; paint; construction paper (optional).	Coat can with white paint to cover advertising, let dry. Decorate with other paint or paper. Make striking stick by gluing dowel inside wooden bead.	Strike metal top of can with stick.
Tooter	Cardboard tube; tissue paper; rubber band; scissors of hole punch.	Punch 3 or 4 holes close to end of 8-inch length of tube. Secure tissue paper over end with rubber band. Decorate if desired.	Blow into open end of tube. Cover holes with fingers. Leave some holes open for different sounds.
Wrist Jinglers	Elastic or felt; jingle bells; needle and thread.	Cut a 2-inch wide wrist band of felt or elastic. Sew on jingle bells.	Shake wrist.

Lummi Stick Activities

Lummi sticks are approximately 12 to 14 inches long and may be made from a variety of materials, or purchased. Suitable materials include: bamboo, dowel sticks, broom handles, or rolled up newspaper. To make lummi sticks simply cut two sticks of equal thickness (about one inch), and equal length (12 to 14 inches), from the material you wish to use. Some materials will require sanding to prevent splintering. Once sticks are sanded they can be painted and varnished. It may be helpful for children who don't know their right from their left to use sticks that are marked with two different colors.

The original game seems to have come from an Indian tribe in the Pacific Northwest who passed down the various activities by work-of-mouth. Today different versions exist in different parts of the world, but all are taken from the basic game, in which two or more people sit facing each other and simultaneously perform the same movements with their lummi sticks.

Players and Formations

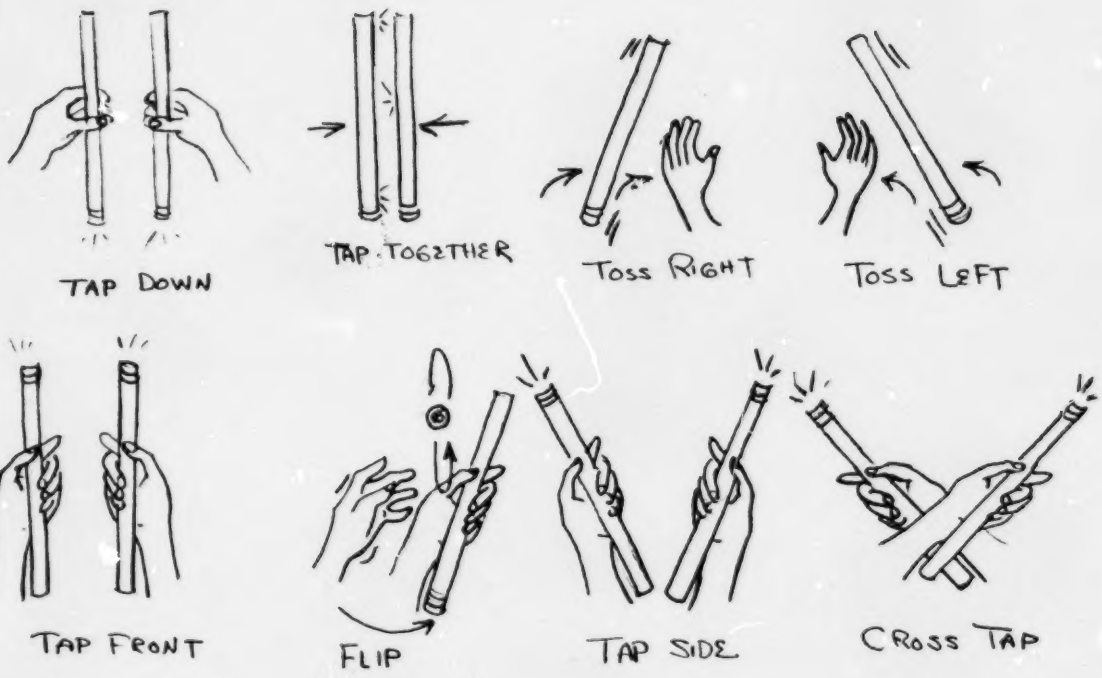
- Two Players: Two individuals sit cross-legged on the floor facing each other, about three feet apart.
- Four Players: Partners sit in the same way opposite each other in a square formation about four feet apart.
- Circle of Players: Any number of players sit or stand facing into the center of a circle.

Holding the Sticks

Hold sticks upright, one in each hand, with the ends resting on the floor, about five inches apart. Hold sticks with fingertips rather than with the whole fist. Fingers are placed on the side away from one's self while thumbs are on the side nearest the player. Hold sticks near the middle at right angles with the floor.

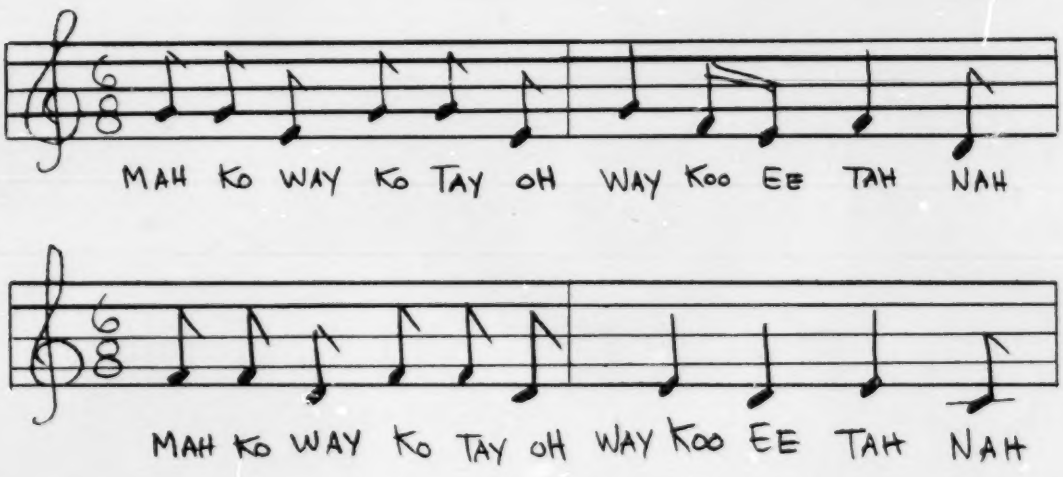
Actions

An action is a single movement of the Lummi Sticks done simultaneously by each partner and performed to one beat. Several actions done consecutively constitute a pattern. Common Lummi Stick actions include: (next page)



The Chant

Traditionally a repetitive chant accompanies Lummi Stick games. Phonograph records with this chant and many variations may be purchased, or children can sing the chant as they play.



Patterns

A good lead-up activity prior to using the Lummi Sticks is one of the many Pat-a-Cake game variations. This will introduce young or lower functioning children to moving their hands in a rhythmic pattern with a partner in time to a chant or song. Sample Pat-a-Cake pattern:

Tap fingers down on table or floor, then palms together (repeat as necessary
Tap down, together, then tap partners hands, and tap together again
Tap down, together, then tap right hands together, tap own hands together
Tap down, together, right hands together, own hands together, left hands, own together, tap down
Vary by inserting a snap at appropriate places if children can do this easily. Vary tempo of motions.

Depending upon the age level and motor skills of children, it may be necessary to start out slowly and simply with the Lummi Sticks. For example, a simple pattern like this: Tap down--tap together. May be embellished: Tap down-tap down-tap together-tap down, or Tap partner's sticks-tap together.

Tap down-tap together
Tap partner's right stick with your right one-tap together (diagonal motion)
Tap partner's left stick with your left one-tap together (diagonal motion)

Tap down-tap together
Exchange right sticks with your partner-tap together
Exchange left sticks with partner-tap together
A toss can be worked in gradually from this pattern. It may be easier to practice tossing using only one stick at first, then practice with each partner using only one stick and each tossing at the same time:

Tap down-shift stick to right hand
Toss stick-tap down
This pattern can also be done in a circle by substituting passing the stick for tossing it.

Other patterns:

Tap down-tap together-toss right
Tap down-tap together-toss left
(Repeat 4 times)

Tap down-tap together-toss right-toss left
(Repeat 6 times)

Tap front-flip-tap down-tap together-toss right-toss left
(Repeat 4 times)

Tap side-flip-tap front-flip-tap down-tap together-toss right-toss left
(Repeat 3 times)

Cross tap-flip-cross tap-tap side-flip-tap side-tap front-flip-tap down-tap together-toss right-toss left
(Repeat 2 times)

Playing with Four

One couple starts the stick motion on count one. The side couple starts two beats later. Head couple starts on the word "ma" and side couple starts on the word "way". All players sing the same words together. While the first couple exchanges sticks, the other couple taps sticks to the floor, and vice versa.

Circle Formation

Advanced players may enjoy the challenge of this variation. Sticks are passed one hand to the right on the toss. A player tosses a stick from his own left hand to his own right and catches the right hand stick of his left neighbor in his own left hand. Sticks may also be tossed to the left. While chanting the regular chant, all players tap down, tap together, and pass sticks at the same time.

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